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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson. GUSTAVUS WATTS CUNNINGHAM. New York: Longmans Green and Company. 1916. Pp. ix + 212.

Professor Cunningham's voice, as it sounds through the pages of *A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson*, is the voice of the Genteel Tradition in American philosophy. Suave in tone, lucid, grave, eloquent, accomplished, it laments the upgrowth of a generation of unscholarly thinkers; quotes Tennyson and T. H. Green; urges German philosophy on us before everything else; finds fault with James; takes Bergson to task and then sets him right, firmly, not unkindly, as a schoolmaster might some brilliant, but youthful and wayward, disciple. In the course of the book certain problems spring up; such problems as are likely to rise and to tower and ramify above a discussion of any particular point in philosophy whatsoever; nature of knowledge; appearance and reality; *etc.*, *etc.* Professor Cunningham touches on these problems interestingly and significantly. But the center of gravity of his book is outside of any topical problem from the history of philosophy. Primarily he attempts, in his book, to draw certain inferences of constructive intent from the contradiction into which he discovers that the philosophy of Bergson has fallen. Competent critics are agreed that the philosophy of Bergson is stricken, and seriously stricken, with contradiction; but the constructions which they try to put on this contradiction are very diverse. Professor Cunningham's argument in the matter runs as follows:

Like Kant, through whom it is well that Bergson be approached

and apprehended, Bergson declares that the intellect is incapable of acquainting our minds with reality. Intellect is restricted to spatial, quasi-spatial, or mechanical categories; reality, on the other hand, is, or at least it may be, non-mechanical. So Kant; so Bergson. Into this situation, or supposed situation, Bergson invokes a new faculty, intuition, to eke out the inadequate intellect. Intuition, in his sense, employs non-spatial, non-mechanical categories. Bergson's originality, then (if original he be), will stand or will fall with this intuition. But the doctrine of Hegel demonstrates clearly that Kant was mistaken in restricting the intellect to mechanical categories. Bergson's contradiction is a problem of Hegel *versus* Kant. Truth lay on Hegel's side. In fact, the later of the Critiques of Kant show Kant forced from his earlier position. Similarly, as Bergson proceeds he is forced to allot to the intellect powers he had assigned, in the first place, to intuition alone. Discrepancy in Bergson's accounts of the nature of the intellect, which he sometimes sets over against intuition, and sometimes identifies with intuition itself, is the source of the disconcerting contradictions and confusions that permeate and weaken this philosopher's work.

Such is the nerve of Professor Cunningham's argument, as far as his diagnosis of Bergson's contradiction is concerned. Beyond this diagnosis, and on it in part, he builds up a doctrine of "Creative Finalism," to replace the "Creative Evolution" of Bergson.

The doctrine of Creative Evolution, Professor Cunningham says, is unintelligible and irrational. It is self-contradictory. Bergson's duration is no process, as lacking all homogeneity. If the evolution of the self were heterogeneous purely, as Bergson contends, both psychology and ethics would be inexplicable; nor could any sense of security be enjoyed by philosophers, since nothing would certify the direction that conscious experience might take. According to the hypothesis of Creative Finalism, however, conscious experience is teleological throughout. Certainly the temporal process is genuine. To be real is to change, to change in accordance with ends which themselves change. Reality creates—actually, spontaneously. Nothing static is real. But, of course, there is law in the midst of this transformation; law guaranteeing the future. Reality expresses a determinate principle; reality, throughout evolution, is ever identical with itself. The only past that possesses existence is precisely the past that now exists. That which is, is that which is to be. Being and becoming are one and the same. "Reality is a flux and yet it is static."

With Professor Cunningham's diagnosis of Bergson's contradiction the reviewer finds himself partly in accord. Bergson unques-

tionably alters his definitions of intuition and of intellect, with the result that they sometimes exclude one another, and sometimes overlap in a greater or less degree. Sometimes intellect, in Bergson's account, may employ the mechanical categories only; sometimes it may employ not only mechanical, but other categories as well. The difficulty, however, is that occasionally Bergson forbids the employment of any categories whatever to intellect; or, it might be better to say, to the mind of the philosopher *quâ* philosopher. This general condemnation of conceptual knowledge Professor Cunningham notes, but regards as too skeptical and absurd to be taken very seriously into account. Its absurdity the reviewer would shrink from denying; nevertheless, contradiction is essentially absurd, and the cardinal problem of Bergson's philosophy, from the point of view that Professor Cunningham chooses to adopt, is: what can it be that drives a philosopher of Bergson's calibre into the absurdity of contradicting himself? Is it a fact that Bergson sets out on the course of his philosophizing with a theory of the intellect which, in the sequel, he tends to reject? Professor Cunningham would have it that the contradiction in Bergson's philosophy is one in process of being outlived—a fortuitous or adventitious affair, which might be eliminated from Bergson's doctrine, leaving that philosopher's theory of knowledge, not very much altered, in the form of a respectable epistemology. On the other hand, we seem to discern a contradiction continually generalized as Bergson writes on; a contradiction most striking and significant in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, *La Perception du Changement*, and *L'Intuition Philosophique*. It would be possible, moreover, to grant that Bergson's difficulties are, in the final analysis, identical with Kant's, without following Professor Cunningham in his view that Kant's fundamental difficulty resulted from his restriction of the intellect to a particular class of categories. Bergson strikes us as contradicting himself most seriously (and instructively) in the latest of his publications, where he struggles with the general question more explicitly than elsewhere; how can a category—any category—be the instrument of knowledge, seeing that a category appears of necessity to define, restrict, and therefore to vitiate, the vision it conveys of an object? This problem, which comes to be ever more prominent in Bergson's thought, we suppose to have been Kant's fundamental preoccupation in the theory of knowledge, and logically, therefore, the point of contact between Bergson and Kant, rather than any consideration of mechanical or non-mechanical categories.

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